

by CAROLINE HASLETT

THE
NEXT
FEW
FOR YEARS

Women in Industry



WITH
COMMENTS
BY

VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA
DAME KATHARINE FURSE
MISS SUSAN LAWRENCE
MRS. LENA SALMON

OUR photographs show (top)
Miss Caroline Haslett,
(centre) Miss Susan Lawrence
and (below) Viscountess
Rhondda

Miss Caroline Haslett, C.B.E., is the Director of the Electrical Association for Women and a member of the Council of the Industrial Welfare Society. She has championed the position of women in industry and has herself achieved eminence in the engineering world. Her article is commented upon by four other prominent women who survey the question from the angles of journalism, social service, politics and industrial administration.

AS THE factors which determine the possibility of openings for women in industry are not solely concerned with their ability to do the jobs, but are still to a large extent determined by public opinion, it is not easy to forecast with any accuracy the part which women will play during the next few years, in determining questions of

industrial statesmanship as managers, as technicians, or as scientific investigators. Industry is, however, becoming more and more sub-divided and in the process of specialization and departmentalization which is everywhere going on, women will undoubtedly take an assured part and reach a permanent place in the higher branches of

industry and commerce. To-day, more than ever, industry depends upon qualities of mind and character rather than of physical strength or mechanical skill, and this would indicate a greater possibility of openings for women than in the past generation, which was more concerned with the making of the machine than the organisation of the individual or the finding of new markets.

IN ORDER to discern the possible place which women will occupy in the future, it would be interesting to see the various positions which women are holding to-day in management, in research work, in laboratories as technicians, in the workshops and in the wider fields of scientific investigations.

LOOKING AT the world of industrial statesmanship to-day, we find the only woman in the Cabinet in charge of the labour problems of the country; alongside of this is the fact of the young girl who, largely owing to her technical training, undertook the strenuous flight from England to Australia. In their different spheres, these two facts alone stand out as indicative of the possible trend of women's progress in the future. Personality and specialised training will find their place in industry which is to-day realising the need for tact, foresight, imagination and creative ability, which women possess, together with qualities of leadership based on a technical or industrial training. A further interesting and perhaps significant fact is that quite a number of daughters are now entering family businesses, and the idea is at last beginning to prevail that it is the qualities of the individual which should be taken into consideration, not the sex. Public opinion on these matters is rapidly changing and women are training more seriously for management and industrial posts.

AS WE look round in industry at the present time, we find women as directors of machine tool companies, women managing large laundries, in charge of important departments in domestic trades, and in the newer branches of commerce, such as advertising, we find many women holding highly paid positions. To my knowledge there is one outstanding woman in the advertising world, who helped to found her firm, and to-day

commands a salary of well over four figures. The enormous development in advertising and the fact that it is now a specialised job should offer great scope for women in the future.

IT is difficult to forecast exactly what the industrial future holds for women. Undoubtedly they will make most headway in the new branches of industry where there is little tradition against them, and where progress depends upon initiative and enterprise. It is a hopeful fact that to-day women are not regarded as freaks if they train as engineers; they take part in technical discussions and are frequently consulted in their capacity as technical experts. We recently heard of a woman who created a new department, and is acting as technical publicist to a firm of well-known instrument makers.

WOMEN ARE also working as civil engineers, and when the negotiations in connection with the Sydney Harbour Bridge were in progress, a woman came from Australia as representative of the engineer, to deal with Messrs. Dorman and Long. In research and metallurgy women are holding their own in such places as the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington. In other directions, women are creating their own companies, finding the capital, and making work not only for themselves but for other men and women. Among these was Mrs. Willson, who, when the need for houses was so great, started a company, found her own capital, and has made her new venture a great financial success. We find again women quarry owners, who have to deal not only with questions of plant and mechanical apparatus, but also with the management of all the types of labour employed in such a concern; women acting as sales agents for machine tools and other engineering products; women working as industrial psychologists, investigating the problems of vocational training.

AN INDICATION of the desire of women to train for administrative posts which require technical knowledge is shown by the courses which have been started to fill this need, at the Borough Polytechnic and at Loughborough College. These courses give train-

ing in economics, social welfare, engineering and other such subjects as will be useful for factory inspectors or supervisors.

IN AVIATION and the motoring world, women, especially in America, are holding responsible posts in connection with civil and commercial aviation. The electrical industry, being a new industry, will no doubt offer work to many women in the future, and it is certainly they who will be instrumental in building up the domestic load, when the grid comes into operation over the country.

WHAT IS happening in England is happening to a larger extent in America, and also in Europe, where we find women beginning to fill posts of technical and administrative responsibility. The recent "Fair Field and No Favour" announcement of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service shews the attitude of the Government, and this will undoubtedly be favourably reflected in commercial life in general.

WHILE THE industrial world will, I think, gradually afford less and less resistance to the entry of women into the skilled and administrative departments of its work, the success which women attain will very largely depend, of course, upon the ability they display and upon their powers of endurance in holding down big jobs in difficult circumstances. Training is necessary and qualifications are required, but the women who will make a success in the future are the women who have the kind of personality which enables them to get on with their colleagues.

VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA, Editor of "Time & Tide."

I have read Miss Haslett's article with great interest. It seems to me to give an exceedingly fair statement of the present position, and of the possibilities of the near future in so far as we are able to visualise them. As Miss Haslett very truly points out, "the factors which determine the possibility of openings for women in industry are not solely concerned with their ability to do jobs, but are still to a large extent determined by public opinion" and therein lies the difficulty of attempting

any accurate forecast. As to how public opinion will move it is never easy to prophesy—but it has moved pretty rapidly of recent years in the direction of favouring the employment of the best person for the job regardless of sex, and let us hope that it will continue to move in the same direction, for that is the only sound basis of employment.

DAME KATHARINE FURSE, G.B.E., R.R.C., Director of the World Bureau of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

I AM RATHER tired of discussing women as such. I think nowadays we want to hear about men and women. As somebody said the other day in response to the remark "There must be a woman on the committee," why not say "There must be at least two men and two women on the committee?" One of the interesting things to me, during the war, was that when women had to take the places of the men, the men expected them to do their work perfectly from the beginning. On Admiralty ledgers, for instance, when a man was taken away who had been doing the work for seven years, a woman was expected to know all about it in six weeks. I think on the whole women were satisfactory.

WHEN WOMEN prove themselves, they will probably get equivalent positions. It is all new, you see; practically only one generation. Perhaps it was the women of the past who wanted to be in the background. They did things in that way and got their way through back doors, so to speak. Of course, women have always helped men by being good hostesses and so forth. I do not think that the young men of the present generation will keep out women. That seems to be passing away. The best person will get the post, whether a man or a woman. No doubt this is a transition stage and presently women will be treated as individuals. You want the combination of men and women helping each other.

MISS SUSAN LAWRENCE, M.P., late Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health.

Women are perfectly capable of taking up many trades and occupations from which they

are at present excluded by custom. But if I am asked to prophesy whether they will do so in this country, I can only say that the present is a terribly unfavourable time for such new ventures. There are very few industries indeed which have not their long list of unemployed, where special skill is being wasted ; and, under such circumstances the ordinary barriers of custom and tradition are necessarily enormously reinforced.

BUT IF I am asked whether there is a new spirit among women, whether the old tradition of "inferiority" is vanishing, my answer is unhesitatingly yes. This is especially seen among the younger women. In my youth, we were all preoccupied with asserting our "rights," but the girls now never talk of their rights, they take them for granted. When I take parties of children around the House of Commons, I always give myself the pleasure of pointing out the old Ladies Gallery to the girls, and telling them how, only a few years ago, women might only peep through bars at the House ; and then I watch for what never fails—the look of contemptuous wonder on the faces of the twelve year olds.

AND I feel that in spite of all the barriers of custom and tradition, and the much greater barrier of the present depression, this new spirit will find its way ; and that I shall probably see—what no one has yet seen in England—a real and practical equality between women and men.

MRS. LENA SALMON, Lady Almoner, Welfare Department, J. Lyons & Co., Ltd.

Old sayings die slowly and die hard. For hundreds of years, for centuries, the edifice of our social, industrial and commercial worlds has been built up on the assumption that the woman's place is the home. It is, therefore, extremely interesting to read Miss Haslett's article with its instances of women occupying positions of real responsibility in business. There has always been in the past, to a certain extent there still is, a prejudice amongst men against women doing work of responsibility. They have an idea that however auspiciously a woman may begin, sooner or later she will sacrifice her

career for a home ; consequently they are very sceptical about availing themselves of women's services.

WE KNOW of the difficulties that beset the pioneer of women welfare workers, Florence Nightingale, when she attempted to organise a military hospital for our soldiers in the Crimea. She had to overcome obstacles which might well have daunted the most enthusiastic, but her great achievement opened the road for women in one walk of life at least. But man's scepticism died hard and it was not until absolute necessity forced him to look to the opposite sex, if he was to carry on at all during the war, that women really began to come into their own.

THE WAR was woman's great opportunity to demonstrate that, given the same chances as man, she could make the same use of them. Women took on the most menial tasks and acquired a technical experience which was to stand them in good stead in the future. They found themselves equipped with knowledge which enabled them to express opinions backed by actual experience. They proved that a woman's brain is naturally no inferior to that of a man's, and that given the same opportunities for development it can reach to the same heights. But what they proved even more surprisingly was the fact that a woman was capable of applying herself to a job, sticking to it and carrying it through to the end.

AT THE SAME TIME it is wrong for women to think that their case is fully proved, that their objective is yet attained. Much has been done, but there is still much to do, and it can only be done by demonstrating solid worth. Statements and claims are all very well, but they prove nothing. It is only by women proving their worth, making themselves individually indispensable that they will eventually attain a stage when the fact that they hold positions of responsibility is no longer a matter for comment or surprise, but is taken as the natural right, regardless of sex, of the individual who has shown capability.

THERE IS only one way to success for either sex, and that lies along the road of hard work that leads to efficiency.